

THE
DUTY
OF
MINISTERS
OF THE

Church of England:

S H E W I N G

How shamefully some of them neglect
their Duty;

And desire to be Shepherds, more for the sake of
the Fleece than the good of the Flock.

Oh! that they were wise! That they would consider their latter end.

By Mr. HARRISON.

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D J T Y

MINISTERS

Church of England

How lamely have they spoken



BY MR. H. A. R. I. S. O. N.

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PRICE THREE PENCE

T H E
D U T Y
O F
M I N I S T E R S.

Acts xx. 24, 25, 26, 27.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

HERE the Apostle proceeds not to boast of himself, but to clear himself, of any charge and surmise of ministerial miscarriages, and also to propound himself as a pattern of ministerial faithfulness to the elders of that church at Ephesus; and here again, our apostle instances in his holy and heroick resolution and activity for God; I know that bonds and afflictions abide me, nevertheless I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, and nothing moves me; as if he had said, I am fully resolved, (by the grace of God enabling) that nothing shall divert me from my duty, neither deterring fear, nor deluding favour of men, shall ever affect me; but I will go out, and go on in the strength of Christ, running my race with patience, and finishing my course with joy. The apprehension of sufferings must not shake the resolutions of a christian, much less daunt the courage of a gospel minister. For he says, None of these things move me. True ministerial courage delights in the air of that danger where duty dwells, and will neither be beaten off from doing an incumbent

bent duty, nor be beaten on to compliance with any known sin. The ministers of Christ should endeavour, not only to finish their ministry and course of christianity with faithfulness, but with joy; and that they may do so, let them see that they give up themselves wholly to the service of Christ without restriction or reserve, and live daily by faith on the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. St. Paul bid defiance to death and danger, for he wished to finish his course with joy. He declares his impartiality in preaching the gospel, ver. 27. I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God: he did not say he had declared the whole counsel of God, for who but God himself can do that: but he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God; that is, he had not concealed from them any truth necessary to salvation, and this freed him from the blood of souls; if any perish it was not his fault; but their blood was upon themselves. I take you (says he) to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men: it is happy when the ministers of God can appeal to the consciences of their people, and summon them as witnesses to bear record for them at the bar of Christ. Lastly, the Apostle tells them, they were never like to see his face again: a cutting killing word. How would it fire the zeal of ministers, and inflame the affections of a people, did they remember, that in a short time they must see the faces, and hear the voices of each other no more? Lord, what fervent prayer for, what yearning of bowels towards, perishing sinners, should thy ministers have? what zeal for their conversion, what endeavours for their salvation?

IN the FIRST place, I shall tell you what manner of persons ministers ought to be, and their duty, and how shamefully they neglect it.

SECONDLY, The wicked minister's punishment.

AND THIRDLY and LASTLY, The happiness the good minister will enjoy at the Last Day.

FIRST,

FIRST, What persons are fit to be ministers. The man who has lived a sober virtuous life, and, while he was at the place of learning, avoided evil company, and who wished and longed to be a minister of the Lord, that he might do much good, and be the happy instrument (under God) of converting many from the evil of their ways: the man that does thus is fit; but how many are chosen ministers, who lead wicked lives? who seek for livings only to get gain. The life will be easy (say they) for we have only two sermons to preach on a Sunday, and all the rest of the week is our own. Are ye not shepherds? why then do ye neglect to feed the flock? you must feed it with wholesome doctrine and overlook it continually, and watch over it with unwearied diligence; how can the flock be duly watched over, when the shepherd lives several miles from the fold, and is following his pleasure, when he should be feeding his sheep? Or do many feed the flock (tho' but poorly) for the sake of the fleece? I fear too many do. See 1 Peter v. 2, 3. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

WHEN ye get up into the pulpit and see your flock around, do you think a few words hurried over will do any good? Perhaps to save trouble, you may take other men's works and read them over, and then go home and say, I have preached a very good sermon. When alas! you never in all your life preached one sermon to convert a poor soul. Of what use will it be to hurry over your sermons, and then hurry away into company and forget that you are servants to the King of Heaven. No my friends, it will never do, without you do more for God and poor souls. Why will ye not do as ye ought, and go round to your poor people, visiting and praying with them, and earnestly intreating them to seek the Lord that they may be saved. 1 Tim. iv. 16. Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; continue in them, for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.

O man!

O man! whoever thou art that neglects to do thy duty, think how great will be thy punishment! consider the success of thy doctrine depends upon the goodness of thy life! you must do as well as teach; for who will believe you in the pulpit, if you contradict yourself in your conversation; 'tis not enough for you to be innocent, unless you appear so; therefore take heed to thy doctrine!

YOUR first duty is to take heed to yourselves; the second is, to take heed to all the flock; for he that neglects his own soul, will never take a faithful care of the souls of others. You must first look to yourselves, that you be fit for the employment you undertake; this is not a burthen for a child's shoulder; he that is himself a babe in knowledge, is altogether unfit to teach men the mysteries of salvation. See 1 Tim. iv. 15. *Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all.* Think you that are ministers, that if those who were inspired, and divinely qualified, must yet read, meditate, study hard, and employ their whole time to fit themselves for the ministerial work; what shall we think of the ignorance and impudence of our lay-preachers, who without any such divine qualification, and without any call or commission, without giving themselves wholly to these things, dare presume to teach the scriptures, when they never understood them and can hardly read them. Take heed that your example does not contradict your doctrine; that your practice does not give your profession the lie, that you do as well as teach; not preaching angelical sermons, and leading diabolical lives; but securing that grace yourselves, which you offer unto others, and shunning that sin yourselves, which you condemn in others: and this because, you have a depraved nature, and vicious inclinations in you as well as others; yea, when others have only their souls to account for; you have not only your own, but others too; in a word, because your sins do more dishonour God, more discredit religion, more gratify the Devil, more harden sinners, and have more of wilfulness in them, more perfidiousness in them, and more hypocrisy in them, than other men's: and you will certainly be adjudged

adjudged by God to a double damnation for them. With a constant care and laborious diligence you should acquaint all with their duty, inform them of their danger, shew them where their happiness lies, and the ways and means for attaining of it. And you must labour to be acquainted with the state of all your people as fully as you can; you must, as the Apostle did before you, visit your people from house to house, that you may know their persons, know their inclinations, and know the manner of their conversation; what sins they are most in danger of, what temptations most liable to, and what duties they neglect, either for the matter or manner of them, and give them the best encouragement, directions and assistance you are able. Often be earnestly advising them to remember to keep the Sabbath-day holy, and advise them to avoid all sinful company, and speaking idle words for which they must give an account at last. Desire them to be careful to avoid walking abroad on the Sabbath-day with idle company, and that they after they go home from church do spend the remainder of the Sabbath in praying, reading the Bible, and singing psalms and hymns.

If any of your flock are sick, and tho' they do not send for you, yet if you hear they are so, it is your duty to go; for in sickness they want your help and assistance most, when they desire it least; and by refusing to go, you may lose the last, and perhaps the best opportunity of doing good unto them. If your people, through stupidity and insensibility, omit their duty in not sending for you; God forbid that, either through pride or sluggishness, you should neglect your duty in going to them. Too often you do not hear that your people are sick, 'till the bell tells you they are dead; if therefore, by any means you gain the knowledge of their condition apply yourselves with all your might to their aid, and stay with them some time, and search them thoroughly; for what use is it to take your prayer-book out of your pocket and read a few printed prayers, and then hurry away from the poor person. Kneel down by them and throw aside your book and pray earnestly by them, (for he is a poor parson that cannot pray without his book) and be
often

often with them and never leave them while they are alive. And it may be, that your pious endeavours may be crowned with joy and rejoicing; and the poor sinner believing and trembling and sorrowing for his mispent life may be happily converted (through God's assistance.) This will be happy for you who have been (under God) the happy instrument of saving a soul. This good action of yours will not be forgotten at the Last Day. Therefore forget not the poor sick, lest God be more angry with you for not going to them, than with them for not sending to you; imitating our blessed Lord, who is found of them that sought him not, for faithful ministers of Christ do judge no labour and pains too great, no strivings and sufferings too much, no contending with the errors and sins of men sufficient, in order to the bringing of them to God by conversion and repentance. And such ministers as indefatigably labour and strive for the good of souls shall not labour and strive alone; they shall be accompanied with divine assistance: Christ will strive with them, and work with them. When ministers have met with success, in their striving by Christ working with them, they must ascribe nothing of praise to themselves, to their own piety, parts or pains; but ascribe all to him, that striveth by them, and worketh in them mightily. Think before you engage in the ministry, what an arduous task you are going to undertake; for the ministry is a laborious and arduous work: neither angels nor men are of themselves sufficient for it, without proportionable assistance from God. You must bear up against all discouragements, and encounter all oppositions: let the way be what it will, fair or foul, a green carpet way, or a dirty way, you must not be frightened at any difficulties, but patiently endure afflictions of all sorts, and cheerfully undergo sufferings of all kinds, and exercising all manner of self-denial for the gospel's sake.

LET it not grieve thee to see men who call themselves ministers, and who enjoy several places; and instead of watching over their flock, they employ others, while they themselves live in grandeur and pride. How many bishops, deans, and doctors are taking
their

their pleasure in their gilded carriages and looking with scorn upon all that are not so great as themselves? Are they serving their Lord and Master? No surely. He travelled on foot, enduring pain and hunger, encompassed with dangers; and he suffered all this to save souls. Perhaps these men may read over a sermon now and then, and they think the labour great and return home weary with the past duty. How great will be the fall of these mighty ministers, who do nothing for Christ, nor strive to win souls? They neglect their duty; and great will be their condemnation, when called upon at the Last Day to give an account what they have done for souls. They will be struck dumb, and will be seized with horror and amazement.—Are there not many who possess three or four fat livings, who sit at home snug and at ease, and who prefer the fire-side and an easy chair before the endeavouring to win souls to Christ. What are ye thinking of, and how often do ye leave the care of immortal souls committed to your charge, to a gentleman who is frequently endued with more wisdom and learning than yourselves; but he has not sufficient interest with my good lord the bishop to obtain a collation; consequently he is obliged to officiate as your curate, perhaps for surplice fees or an annual stipend, scarce adequate to the wages of a journeyman taylor. Are ye not very careful in collecting your tythes? I wish ye were as careful to gather immortal souls to Christ.—Such Teachers! such Bishops and Deans! who are a scandal to christianity. O what will become of them! they will be miserable for ever in another world. There they will have no coach and six to carry their vile carcases about.

Ye that wish to serve the blessed Lord with sincerity be stedfast, and go on with resolution, for you will have many enemies to encounter and conflict with. Such as Satan's temptations, the world's persecutions, sinners corrupt lusts and affections. Let the ministers of God then reckon before hand upon a toilsome and troublesome life; for if they resolve to be faithful, the Devil will plant all his artillery against them. Nevertheless, for your comfort, God will, at the reckoning day, account and treat such as spiritual fathers, who have been faithful,

ful, though unsuccessful in the work of Christ. Are you willing to spend and have spent, not only your time, but your strength, life, and health: if you are willing to do this for Christ, great will be your reward. Oh how tender are some of their carcase! how fearful of their skin! how sparing of their pains for fear of shortening of their days, and hastening their end! whereas the lamp of your lives can never burn out better than in lighting others to Heaven: is it not better that your flesh consume with industry and usefulness, than wear out with rust and idleness! as it is the duty, so 'tis the disposition, of the faithful ministers of Christ to spend and to be spent for souls. And those ministers that care not for their flock, but indulge their unruly appetites, giving the flesh whatever it craves, and can deny it nothing it desires, pampering the body to the prejudice of the soul; they go not in St. Paul's road to Heaven, but the contrary; they gratify what he mortified; they indulge what he subdued; he administered to the wants, they to the wantonness, of the flesh. How many of them will preach against the using of cards and dice, and will themselves spend many hours at the card-table coveting to win money. How great will be their condemnation! Nor is it proper that ministers should be seen in an ale-house, as too many of them are. If you reprove a man (as one did once saying) I wonder friend how thou can'st spend thy time in an ale-house so much, and often at cards? The man answered, "What harm is there in it, when our minister goes there? What harm in playing a game at cards, when our minister often is seen playing at cards? Shall we not spend our money at cock-fighting, for our minister does the same? May we not go to the play-house when the players come? for our minister is often there. Nay, he is a justice of the peace, and gives them leave to make a play-house of his barn." How shocking to hear of these things. Therefore a minister who has been all his life a preacher may at last prove a cast-away, for as he did not do as he bid others, therefore he will be punished. See Luke xii. 46. and following verses. *The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when*

when he is not aware. And soon.—Thus the negligent steward and unfaithful minister is described: next his sentence is declared,—1st, Christ will surprise him in sin and security, *by coming in an hour when he lookt not for him.* He will execute temporal vengeance upon him, *He will cut him in pieces.* God seldom suffers slothful ministers to live out half their days. Christ will punish them with eternal destruction also, *and appoint them their portion with unbelievers.* Teaching us that such ministers as neglect the service of God and the souls of their people, as they are ranked amongst the worst set of sinners in this life, so shall they be punished with them in the severest manner in the next. When Satan destroys the souls of men, he shall answer for it as a murderer only; not as an officer that was intrusted with the care of souls. Woe to those ministers who at the great day hear distressed souls roaring out their complaints, and howling forth that doleful accusation against their ministers, saying, “Lord! our stewards have defrauded us, our watchmen have betrayed us, our guides have misled us.”

THIRDLY, The wicked minister's punishment. His moments are fast running on, his life soon will be ended, and he will go to the place appointed for the dead; while he lived he was often called upon to attend the corpse of some of his people, and when he went to the grave did he think that he was doing for others what must some time or other be done for himself? O minister! thou art now committing the dust of one of thy flock to the silent grave, where it must remain 'till the last trump shall sound; thou wilt soon be in the same condition, death will soon close thy eyes, and another will perform the sorrowful ceremony over thy sad remains; thou wilt be committed to the dust, and soon forgotten; but when the last trump shall sound thou must arise, and appear before the Lord Jesus who will be thy judge; then will appear those that attended to hear thy preaching while thou wast in the world: and thou must give an account how thou spendest thy time, and what good thou didst for Christ while thou wast his minister; then will appear against thee many, accusing thee, and saying, He preached to
us,

us, and we got no good by it; for he spent his time
 in the ale-house, and was stupified with drink, and set
 us a bad example. Had he done right, he would have
 come and prayed by us, and advised us to have done
 well. We did see him in the pulpit on a Sunday, but
 all the week after he came not near us. Our own
 foolishness and the bad example he set before us, has
 been the cause of our ruin. We did not 'till too late,
 remember St. Paul's words, which were: "*For I*
know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves
enter in among you, not sparing the flock." See Acts xx.
 29. How grievous, how cutting, will such reflections
 be; to be compared to a ravening wolf;—and why?—
 because you suffered the Devil, the mortal enemy of
 poor souls, to enter in and tempt and worry thy flock,
 when thou mightest have kept him out, and triumphed
 over him. How great will be thy punishment to be
 accused and condemned to eternal misery? You that
 was a minister, that listed under Christ's banner, that
 proclaimed yourself in the world to be a minister of
 Christ, and yet did not do your duty, now when too
 late you will wish you had done well. When the
 judge shall say, Who profited by thy sermons? Didst
 thou think foolish man that a few prayers hurried over
 would convert souls? No! no! it required great pains
 and an unwearied diligence and an earnest begging
 poor souls to come and be saved. Thou wast chosen
 to be a minister, but thought the burden too great, and
 shifted it off thyself and laid it upon others. The fall
 of Judas who was an apostle and minister, ought to
 have made thee very earnest in prayer to thy God to
 keep thee, that the Devil might have had no power
 over thee to draw thee into a snare to ruin thee for-
 ever, which he has done. Thou knewest what a
 cruel deceitful enemy he was: why didst thou not
 remember St. Paul, he began ill but ended well? Thou
 wast taught when thou wast young who the Lord was,
 but like Judas thou began well but ended ill. The
 interest of the great obtained several places for thee,
 and covetousness and sin has been the cause of thy
 ruin: sometimes thou hast got up into the pulpit, and
 how ought thy soul to have triumphed with joy to see
 the young, the old, the rich, the poor, assembled to
 hear

hear thee, and how earnestly oughtest thou to have
 begged of them to come and be saved, to beg them to
 fly into the arms of their Redeemer. But soon was thy
 sermon ended and thou wast glad that the toilsome
 work was done. Cast ye the unprofitable servant into
 that punishment which is prepared for the wicked.
 Then will the wicked minister smite upon his breast and
 say, "O wretched man that I am, I was a minister,
 " but cared not what became of my people which were
 " put under my care. How did I hurry over the service
 " and my sermons, and how glad was I when I had
 " done; then I hurried away into company, and
 " often I went to the ale-house, and then to the play-
 " house, and forgot that I was a servant of the Lord,
 " and that if I did my duty, I should meet with a re-
 " ward worth more than ten thousand worlds; but
 " now all is too late. O stupid wretched creature that
 " I have been; how could I forget that eternal joy
 " that was prepared for the good. O how amazingly
 " stupid have I been, that ever I could forget eternal
 " joy, eternal woe, the eternal God and the place of the
 " unchangeable abodes. In yonder world I might have
 " had life, but would not; and now how fain would
 " I have death, but cannot! how quick were my sins
 " in the execution, and how long is their punishment
 " in duration! how shall I dwell with everlasting
 " burnings! O miserable man that I am! I am now
 " to go into everlasting sorrow." There the Devils will
 mock and say, "There is the man that put his hand to
 the plough and drew back. Where are all the people
 that thou didst convert? there is not one to speak for
 thee, and to give thee a character. All are silent,
 and not one of the many thousands that heard thee
 preach will say, that thou didst convert him from sin.
 Thou didst preach over other men's sermons, not car-
 ing to be at the trouble of making thy own; thou didst
 but little for thy master, and has been serviceable to us
 when thou mightest have done us much harm; but now
 it is too late for thee to amend; time is past, for thou
 didst choose thy good things in yonder world and must
 suffer in this; for as thou didst serve the Devil in the
 world, so thou must dwell with him in eternal tor-
 ments; fire and brimstone will be thy food both day
 and

and night, and never, never more wilt thou enjoy any ease."

FOURTHLY, How different will be the condition of the faithful minister, the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he goes to perform the last ceremony over the grave of one of his people; he sheds the tear, and says, "There is one gone whom I attended in his sickness, and have great hope that his dear soul is now happy. At the Last Day he will appear, and speak for me, as I hope many more will whom I have had under my care. I have with the help and assistance of an Almighty friend, endeavoured to do my duty. You that stand around the grave, I desire to take warning; for you must all sooner or later be in the condition this man is in, cold as clay, and be committed to the silent grave. O now cry! while you have precious time, to God! for your grave and coffin will soon be prepared; your glass has but a little sand left in it and soon will be out."

SECONDLY, The good minister in the pulpit will tell all their faults, and beg them to forsake them. When he hears that any of his flock are drunken and idle: he will go to them, and endeavour to win them to soberness and Christ; yea, he will rejoice if they reform and turn to the Lord. Happy is the minister that doeth thus, when he lieth on his dying bed, and remembers that he has done his duty, and that he is going to a happy world where he will meet with many of his people, and all will join in singing the praises of the blessed Jesus. He dies and is laid in the grave, his people follow, mourning the loss of their faithful Pastor; but when the last trump shall sound, he will arise, and, with the happy number whom he converted (with God's assistance) from the error of their ways, will appear before the judge, and will hear the joyful sentence; Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into thy master's joy.

THIRDLY, The good ministers will have an additional joy and glory from the success of their pious and

and painful labours which God has crowned with the conversion and edification of many souls! Lord who would not study, spend and be spent in the service of such a master; is it not worth all our labour and sufferings to appear in the presence of Christ, accompanied with all those souls, whom we have instrumentally either brought home; or built up in the most holy faith, either converted, comforted, or confirmed in the way to Heaven. To hear one spiritual child say, Lord this is the instrument by whom I believed; another, this is the minister by whom I was established; a third, this is he that quickened me by his example, and provoked me to a heavenly love, and to good works. O blessed be God that ever I saw his face, and heard his voice: but, Lord, what will it be to hear thy blessed voice, saying to us, Well done good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of me your Lord; I have kept an exact account of all your fervent prayers for your people, of all your instructive and perswasive sermons, of all your sighs and groans, poured forth before me on behalf of those whom you would have perswaded to be happy, but they would not. Every tear from your eye, and drop of sweat from your face, shall now meet with an eternal recompence, you shall now find me according to my promise, not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love. O! what a master do the ministers of Christ serve; who would not sacrifice all that is dear for him, who has the assurance of such an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

LASTLY, May all think of this! may all be good and remember, that they are to live in this world but a little time, and then they must leave it. There is a happy and glorious world prepared for them that love, fear, and obey the Lord; and that all may be happy and arrive at Heaven is the wish of every good person.

THE soul when it leaves the body flies up to Heaven; and never again can be assaulted with temptations; those that arrive in safety there, need never to fear any hurt from enemies, nor any bitterness to digest. O
 dear

dear soul thou art going to reap and enjoy the blessed fruits of thy Saviour's victories, and to be eternally satisfied with the celestial pleasures that are at the right hand of the God of mercies. And now to the blessed God our Saviour be everlasting honours paid for ever more. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

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